

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ISLAMA 02396 131230Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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O 131120Z MAR 77 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 299

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 2396

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PK, US
SUBJECT: CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO BHUTTO

1. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, EMBASSY HAD RECOMMENDED THAT PRESIDENT SEND PROMPT, BRIEF CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO ON HIS ELECTION VICTORY. WE NOW BELIEVE WE SHOULD DELAY SENDING SUCH WORD FROM PRESIDENT UNTIL PM IS SWORN IN FOR HIS SECOND TERM. WE BELIEVE THERE ARE SEVERAL COMPELLING ARGUMENTS FOR SUCH A DELAY.
 2. WHILE A PROMPT MESSAGE WOULD HAVE BEEN GRATIFYING TO BHUTTO, IT WOULD NEVERTHELESS HAVE BEEN VIEWED BY HIM AND OTHERS HERE LARGELY AS A PRO-FORMA GESTURE MADE IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTER-MATH OF THE POLLS. ON THE CONTRARY, A MESSAGE SENT NOW COULD BE SEEN AS REFLECTING OUR CONSIDERED JUDGEMENT ON THE DISPUTED HONESTY OF THE ELECTION. WITH THE OPPOSITION CHARGING THAT THERE WAS MASSIVE MANIPULATION AT THE POLLS, ESPECIALLY IN THE PUNJAB, AND THIS VIEW EVIDENTLY GAINING INCREASING POPULAR CREDENCE, THE RECEIPT AND PUBLICATION OF A CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE NOW COULD BE POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING TO THE USG AND INVOLVE US -- THROUGH OUR PLACING OUR INFORMAL IMPRIMATUR ON THE RESULTS -- IN AN UNNECESSARILY EXPOSED POSITION BOTH HERE AND IN THE US. ALSO, IF OPPOSITION PLANS TO ENGAGE IN LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS IN VIOLATION OF SECTION 144 BEGINNING MARCH 14 ARE IMPLEMENTED, AND IF THE GOP TAKES PUNITIVE
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ACTION, QUESTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS COULD COME TO THE FORE, WITH SIMILAR POTENTIAL FOR EMBARRASSMENT.

3. WE BELIEVE IT IS NOW REASONABLE TO WAIT FOR THE NEXT LOGICAL OCCASION -- WHEN THE PM IS SWORN IN. (ACCORDING TO THE PAK CONSTITUTION, THE NEWLY ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MUST BE CONVOKED WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THE ELECTIONS; A FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS

IS THE ELECTION OF A PRIME MINISTER.) THIS SEEMS TO BE THE COURSE MOST OTHER WESTERN NATIONS, AND THE SOVIET UNION AND PRC, MAY BE PLANNING TO FOLLOW SINCE CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES HAVE APPARENTLY NOT YET BEEN RECEIVED HERE FROM THEM. (MESSAGES PUBLICIZED IN THE PRESS HERE SO FAR HAVE BEEN FROM SOME OF PAKISTAN'S MUSLIM AND THIRD WORLD FRIENDS, PLUS INDIA AND CANADA. BRITS HERE TELL US THAT EC9 HAVE DECIDED HOLD UP MESSAGES UNTIL PM'S SWEARING IN.) THUS FURTHER DELAY WOULD NOT CAUSE THE US TO APPEAR BACKWARD IN OFFERING CONGRATULATIONS, AND WOULD RESTORE THE PRO-FORMA CHARACTER OF OUR MESSAGE.

4. IN THE MEANTIME, WE WOULD URGE THAT THE DEPARTMENT AVOID TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE ANY COMMENT ON THE EVOLVING POLITICAL SITUATION IN PAKISTAN.
BYROADE

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